

***ALEOCHARA BINOTATA* KR., NOT *A. VERNA* SAY (COL.:
STAPHYLINIDAE), A BRITISH INSECT**

R. COLIN WELCH

*Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, Monks Wood Experimental Station, Abbots Ripton,
Huntingdon, Cambs PE17 2LS.*

IN JULY 1963 I collected a small *Aleochara* from dry dung on sand dunes at Spurn Head, Yorkshire. The specimen, a female, although obviously a member of the subgenus *Coprochara*, had paler elytra and significant differences in puncturation to the common *A. bipustulata* L. Dissection revealed a distinctly shaped spermatheca which did not appear to fit any of the known Northern European species. However, following Likovsky's (1965) description of a new Mongolian subspecies of *A. verna* Say, four specimens were examined standing over that name in the M. Cameron Collection in the Natural History Museum, London. Three proved to be males, but the one female had a spermatheca very similar to the Spurn specimen. Dr A. Strand also kindly loaned me specimens, of what he considered to be *A. verna*, collected at Kirkenstuen, Norway, in 1934 and 1935. These compared favourably with the Spurn specimen.

Enquiries of a number of North American museums revealed that Say's type material had been destroyed, mostly by dermestids, but a number of specimens were obtained, on loan, from the Smithsonian Institution's Casey bequest, for comparison. In none of the American *A. verna* females did the spermathecal duct form such a pronounced spherical mass. Most possessed spermathecae which, at the time, I considered to be within the range of variation of the common *A. bipustulata* (Welch, 1964). Clearly the Spurn specimen was what European coleopterists referred to as *A. verna*, but there was some doubt as to whether this name was valid. As it was definitely a species new to Britain, it was added to the British List under that name (Welch, 1969).

In the course of the next two decades I have collected and examined large numbers of *A. bipustulata* without coming across a single specimen remotely similar to the Spurn female. Recently Klimaszewski (1984) reviewed the North American species of *Aleochara* and discovered two consistent types masquerading under the name *A. verna*; the true Nearctic species of Say, and an unidentified European species. He comments that "The European concept of this species is erroneous" but "refrained from making any formal changes in European nomenclature". His call for European coleopterists to solve this problem was taken up shortly afterwards when Dr G.A. Lohse visited North America to examine Staphylinidae in museum collections. He concluded that the species previously regarded as *A. verna* in Europe was in fact *A. binotata* Kr. His published key to the red-spotted species of *Coprochara*, and his figure of the spermatheca, fit my description of the Spurn specimen (Lohse, 1986, fig. 1c).

Clearly, on the above evidence, *A. verna* Say should be deleted from the British List of Coleoptera and replaced by *A. binotata* Kr. However, the story may not end there. When I originally compared the Spurn female with *A. bipustulata*, I figured the spermatheca of a specimen which possessed what I considered to be the "maximum development of coiling found in this species". I further commented that the "sclerotized part of the spermathecal duct most commonly had two or three coils". This spermatheca bears a remarkable likeness to both Klimaszewski's (1984, fig. 37) and Lohse's (1986, fig. 4c) drawings of what they regard as the true *A. verna*. Perhaps among those specimens which I had hitherto regarded as but one extreme in the range of variation in the spermathecal structure of *A. bipustulata* are to be found British examples of *A. verna*. Only time, and a more detailed study of a large number of specimens, will provide the answer.

References

- Klimaszewski, J. 1984. A revision of the genus *Aleochara* Gravenhorst of America north of Mexico (Coleoptera: Staphylinidae, Aleocharinae). *Mem. ent. Soc. Canada*, No. 129.
- Likovskiy, Z. 1965. 32. *Aleochara*-Arten Ergebnisse der Zoologischen Forschungen von Dr Z. Kassab in der Mongolei (Coleoptera, Staphylinidae). *Reichenbachia*, 7 (4): 47-55.
- Lohse, G.A. 1986. *Aleochara*-Studien 11. Die rotgeflecken Arten der Untergattung *Coprochara* Mulsant, *Rey. Verh. Ver. naturw. Heimatforsch, Hamburg*, 39: 95-98.
- Welch, R.C. 1964. The biology of the genus *Aleochara* Grav. (Coleoptera, Staphylinidae). PhD Thesis, University of London 1969. *Aleochara verna* Say (Col., Staphylinidae) New to Britain. *Entomologist*, 102: 207-209.

***Bledius germanicus* Wagner (Col.: Staphylinidae) new to Nottinghamshire**

I operate a Robinson trap on the half-roof of Wollaton Hall, Nottingham (OS grid ref. SK 533 393), and on the night of 23rd-24th May 1989 the catch included two small female Staphylinids which I tentatively identified as *Bledius germanicus* Wagner.

Since this is a coastal species associated fairly strictly with mud that has a salt content, I sent one of the specimens to Peter Hammond of the Natural History Museum, who was able to confirm my determination.

Dr Hammond informs me that although flying individuals are sometimes intercepted at some distance from salt water, there is only one previous record (that of Walker, 1932, *Ent. mon. Mag.*, for *B. spectabilis*, but probably referable in reality to *B. germanicus*) for a locality (Oxford) at a great distance from the sea.— DR SHEILA WRIGHT, Nottingham Natural History Museum, Wollaton Hall, Nottingham.